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ONCE A YEAR, WE ALL BECOME A LITTLE FLIGHTY, CAUGHT UP, HOWEVER BRIEFLY, IN THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON...
♪ GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN ♪
AND WHAT'S TRUE FOR US IS CERTAINLY NO LESS TRUE FOR THOSE STALWART DAMES AND FELLOWS OF THE DAILY PLANET, GATHERED THIS AFTERNOON FOR THE ANNUAL OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY--
--AND JOINED BY A FRIEND NAMED SUPERMAN!
5-3549

"The WAR FOR PEACE!"

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CURT SWAN — PENCILLER
DAVE HUNT — INKER
BEN ODA — LETTERER
GENE D'ANGELO — COLORIST
JULIUS SCHWARTZ — EDITOR

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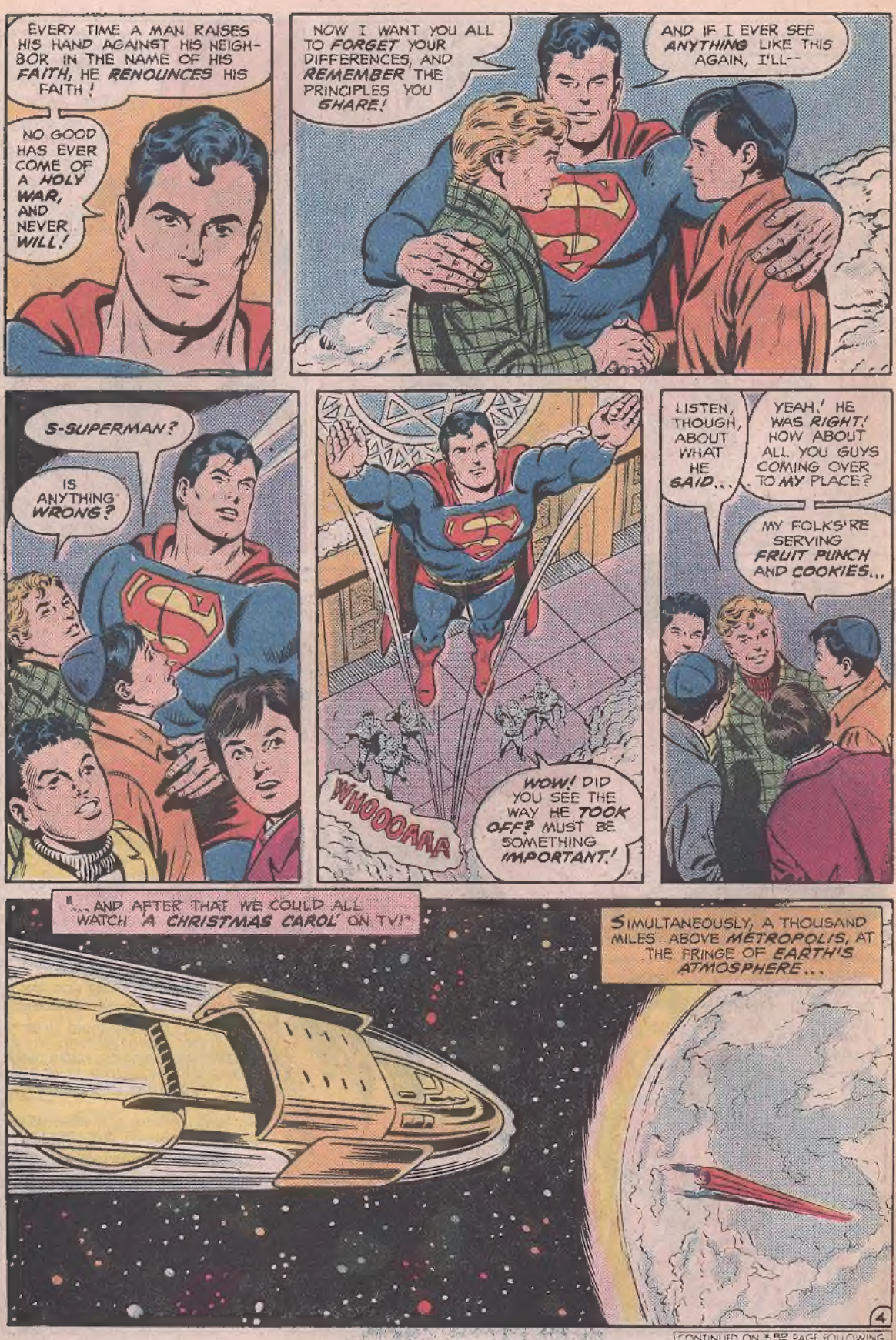
AH, MISTLETOE, YOU'RE A HANDY TRADITION! WHILE LOIS IS OFF IN THE POWDER ROOM, I'LL SNEAK A MARCH ON HER WITH SUPERMAN!
PUCKER UP, LUV! 'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY, GOOD WILL TO EVERY MAN, ET CETERA, ET CETERA...
HRISTMAS!
HUH?
TOO BAD CLARK COULDN'T GET BACK HERE IN TIME FROM HIS OUT-OF-TOWN ASSIGNMENT!
LOSE SOMETHING, LANA DEAR?
WHERE DID HE-- WHY DID HE--
WHAT? OH, LOIS! ACTUALLY, LUV, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE LOST SOMETHING-- YOUR DATE!
HE PROBABLY SAW SOME TROUBLE THAT NEEDED ATTENDING TO, AND TOOK OFF.
LOIS... WHY THANK YOU!
I'M USED TO IT BY NOW. JUST LIKE I'M USED TO YOU, LANA. SOME PUNCH!
TO PEACE ON EARTH, LANA...
...AND TO THE MAN WE BOTH ADORE...
FOXY
2

"... WHEREVER HE IS!"
I NOTICED THIS FIGHT WITH MY TELESCOPIC VISION WHILE I WAS UP IN THE PLANET OFFICES -- AND AT FIRST, I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT!
THIS KIND OF VIOLENCE, ON A DAY RESERVED FOR HARMONY?
IT'S GOT TO BE STOPPED--
--RIGHT NOW!
HEY, WHAT--?
WHO'S THE WISE--
I AIN'T PUTTIN' UP WITH--
WHOOOOSH
BREAK IT UP, YOUNGSTERS! IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED, IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE!
IT'S MY HOLIDAY, NOT YOURS!
A LOT HE CARES!
I'M NOT HEARING THIS -- YOUR HOLIDAY, HIS HOLIDAY...
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S BEING CELEBRATED TONIGHT? HOPE, AND PEACE, AND LOVE! YOU CAN'T DO BATTLE IN THE NAME OF LOVE!
THIS IS A SEASON FOR EVERYONE ...BUT YOUR ANGER CHEAPENS IT!
3


EVERY TIME A MAN RAISES HIS HAND AGAINST HIS NEIGHBOR IN THE NAME OF HIS FAITH, HE RENOUNCES HIS FAITH!
NO GOOD HAS EVER COME OF A HOLY WAR, AND NEVER WILL!
NOW I WANT YOU ALL TO FORGET YOUR DIFFERENCES, AND REMEMBER THE PRINCIPLES YOU SHARE!
AND IF I EVER SEE ANYTHING LIKE THIS AGAIN, I'LL--
S-SUPERMAN?
IS ANYTHING WRONG?
WHOOOAAA
WOW! DID YOU SEE THE WAY HE TOOK OFF? MUST BE SOMETHING IMPORTANT!
LISTEN, THOUGH, ABOUT WHAT HE SAID...
YEAH! HE WAS RIGHT! HOW ABOUT ALL YOU GUYS COMING OVER TO MY PLACE?
MY FOLKS'RE SERVING FRUIT PUNCH AND COOKIES...
"...AND AFTER THAT WE COULD ALL WATCH 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' ON TV!"
SIMULTANEOUSLY, A THOUSAND MILES ABOVE METROPOLIS, AT THE FRINGE OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE...
4

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

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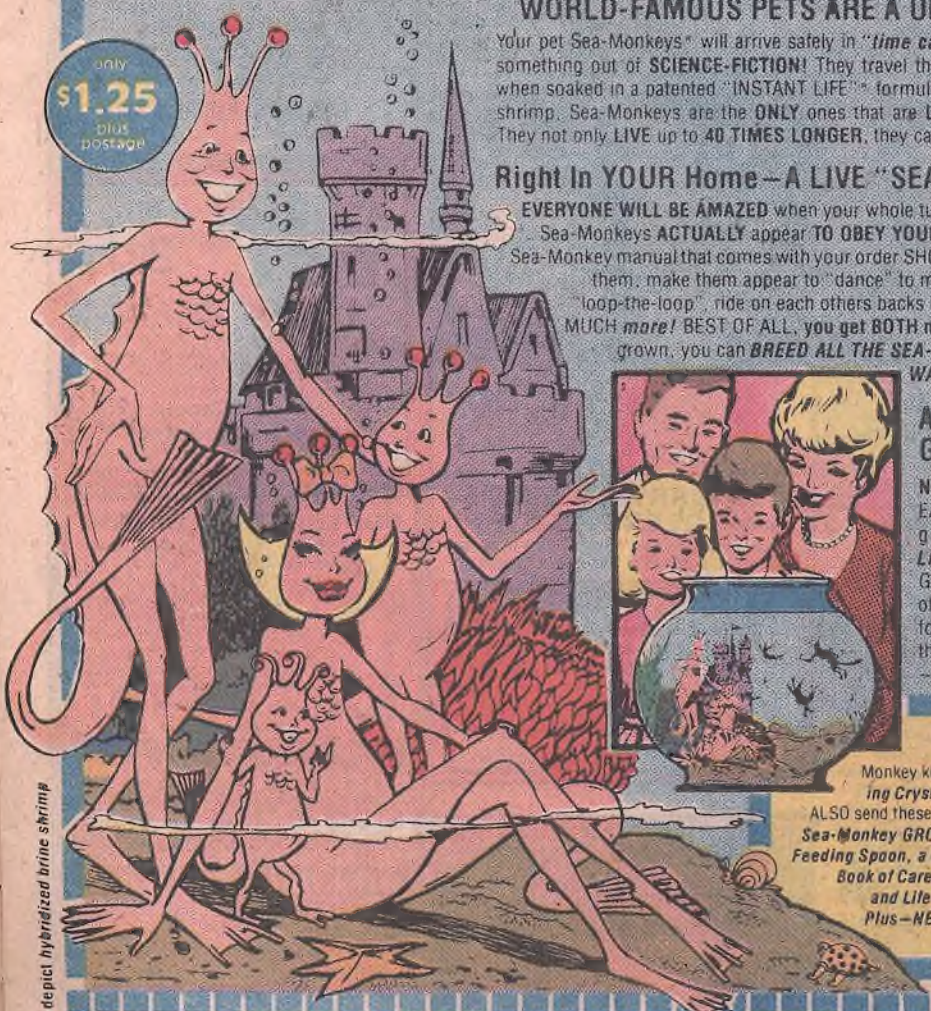

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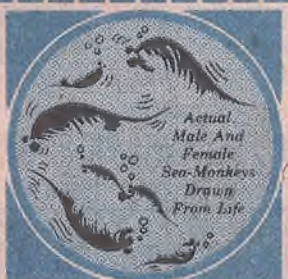

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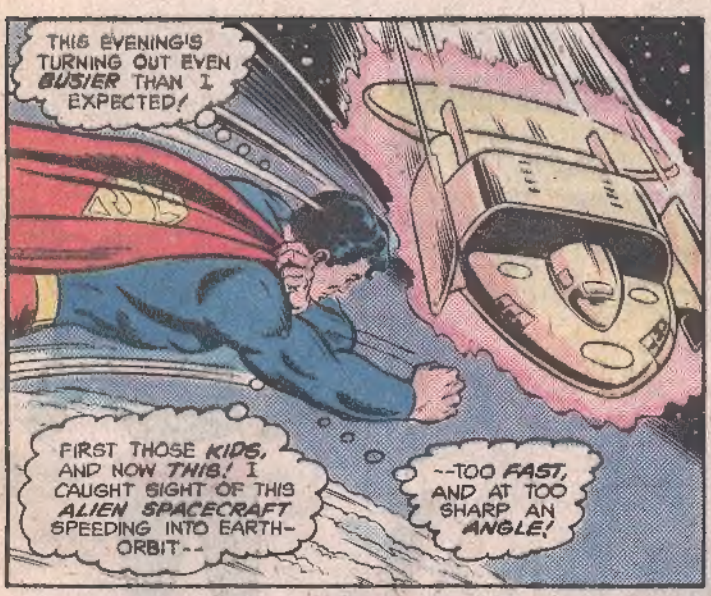
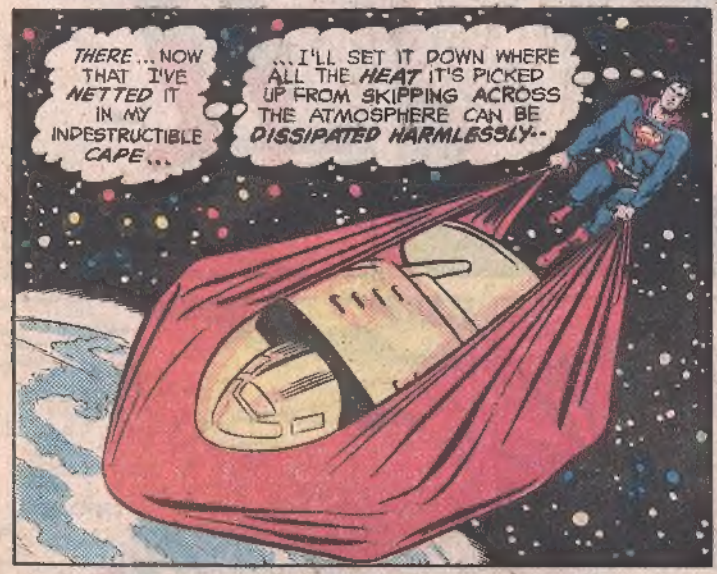
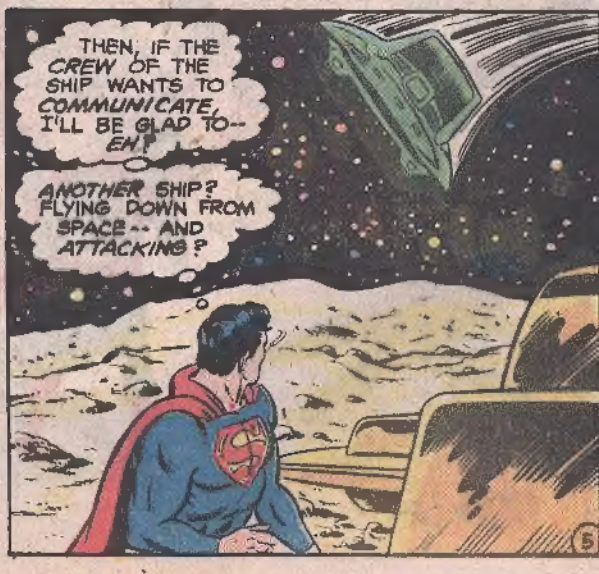

THIS EVENING'S TURNING OUT EVEN BUSIER THAN I EXPECTED!
FIRST THOSE KIDS, AND NOW THIS! I CAUGHT SIGHT OF THIS ALIEN SPACECRAFT SPEEDING INTO EARTH-ORBIT--
--TOO FAST, AND AT TOO SHARP AN ANGLE!

IF IT GOES ANY DEEPER INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, IT'LL BURN UP FROM FRICTION!
HAVE TO CATCH IT WITHOUT HURTING ITS PASSENGERS, IF ANY!

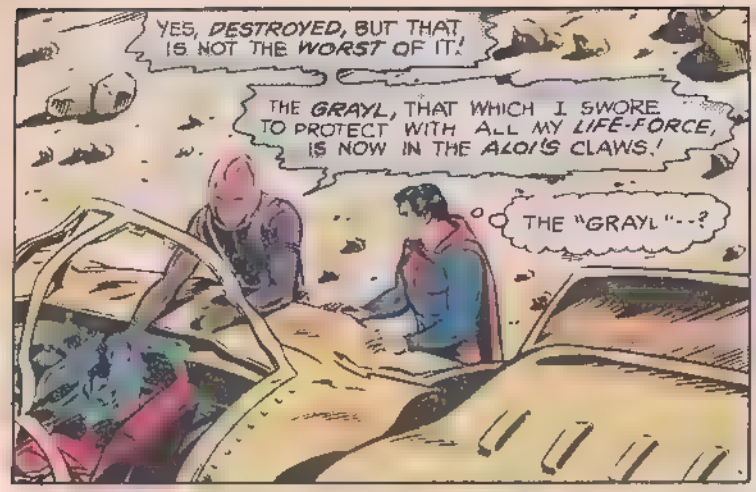

THERE...NOW THAT I'VE NETTED IT IN MY INDESTRUCTIBLE CAPE...
...I'LL SET IT DOWN WHERE ALL THE HEAT IT'S PICKED UP FROM SKIPPING ACROSS THE ATMOSPHERE CAN BE DISSIPATED HARMLESSLY--

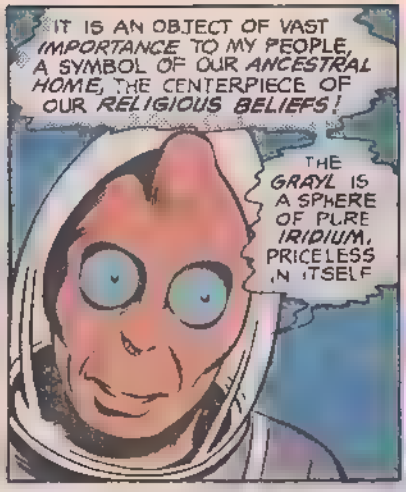
--THE MOON!
HMMM...THERE'S SO MUCH LEAD IN THE SHIP'S BULKHEAD, I CAN'T SEE INTO IT WITH MY X-RAY VISION!

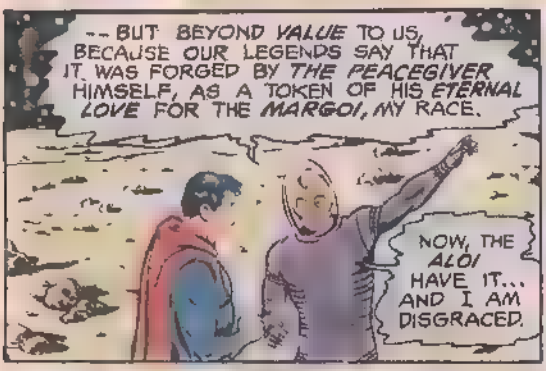
I'VE NO RIGHT TO BREAK INSIDE JUST TO SATISFY MY CURIOSITY--
--SO I'LL SIMPLY WAIT HERE UNTIL THE SKIN OF THE SHIP COOLS OFF!

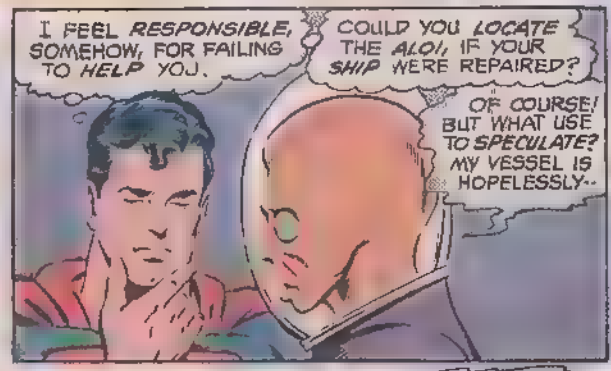

THEN, IF THE CREW OF THE SHIP WANTS TO COMMUNICATE, I'LL BE GLAD TO--
EH?
ANOTHER SHIP? FLYING DOWN FROM SPACE -- AND ATTACKING?

I'VE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH OF THIS FOR ONE DAY!
IT'S TIME I PUT A STOP TO--
IMPACT!
INTENSE COLD TAKES THE MAN OF STEEL IN AN ICY GRIP...
...AND FOR A TIME, HE KNOWS AND FEELS NOTHING!
THEN, THE SENSATION PASSES, LEAVING A RESIDUE OF SOME INDEFINABLE PARALYSIS WHICH THE METROPOLIS MARVEL SHAKES OFF ONLY WITH AN EFFORT...
WHAT--HAPPENED TO ME? I COULDN'T MOVE!
THAT WAS BECAUSE THE ALOI USED A RAY THAT SLOWS MOLECULAR INTERACTIONS!
WITH IT, THE ALOI COULD STOP A SUN FROM SHINING!
YOU'RE SPEAKING TO ME TELEPATHICALLY...?
IT IS A TECHNIQUE MY RACE DEVELOPED WHEN WE BEGAN OUR EXPANSION INTO THE GALAXY. IT FACILITATES COMMUNICATION WITH NEW SPECIES.
VERY HANDY! I GATHER THAT YOUR SHIP WAS DESTROYED WHILE I WAS INDISPOSED?
6

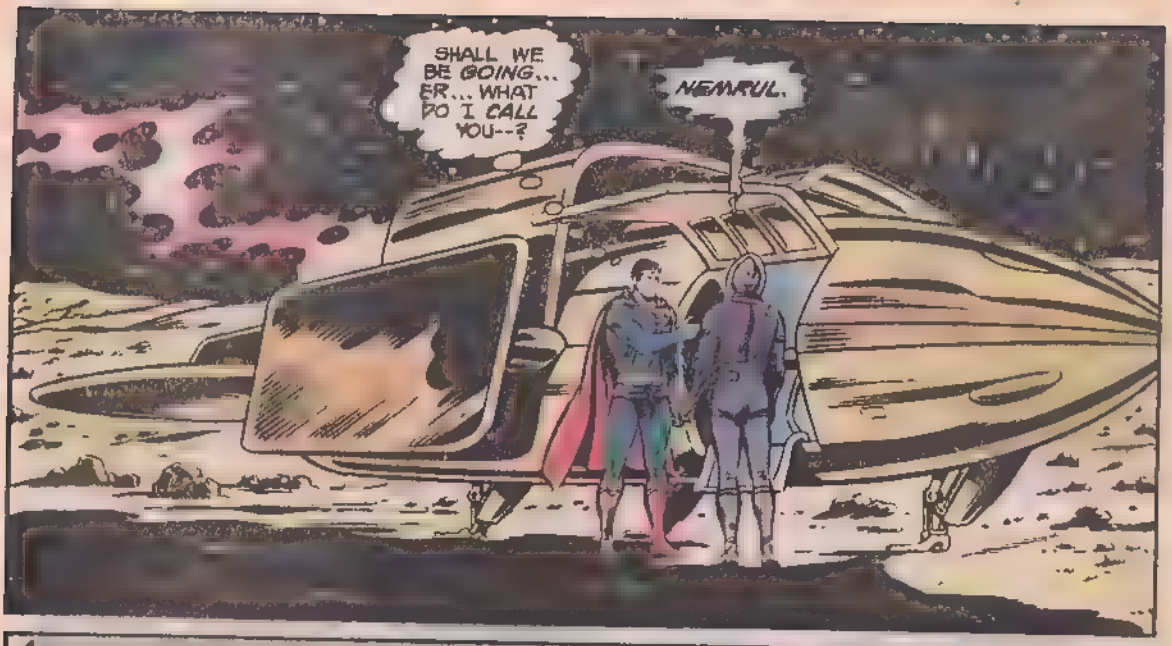

YES, DESTROYED, BUT THAT IS NOT THE WORST OF IT!
THE GRAYL, THAT WHICH I SWORE TO PROTECT WITH ALL MY LIFE-FORCE, IS NOW IN THE ALOI'S CLAWS!
THE "GRAYL"--?

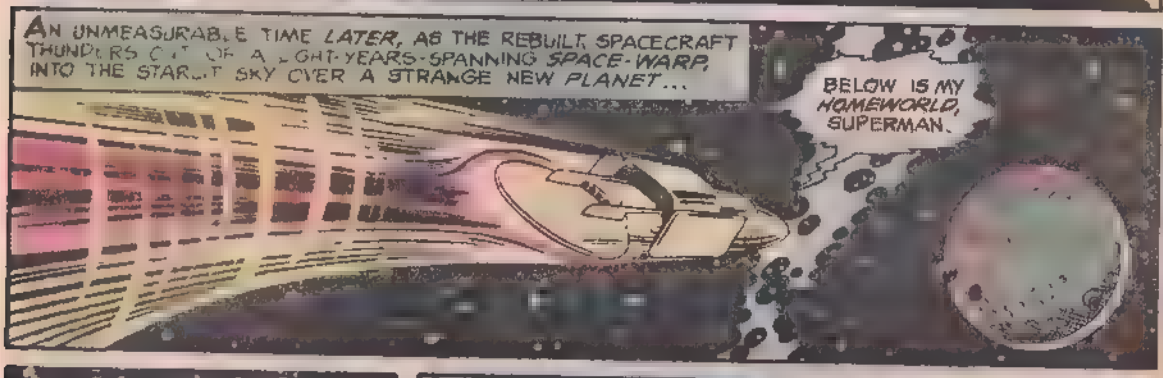

IT IS AN OBJECT OF VAST IMPORTANCE TO MY PEOPLE, A SYMBOL OF OUR ANCESTRAL HOME, THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS!
THE GRAYL IS A SPHERE OF PURE IRIDIUM, PRICELESS IN ITSELF

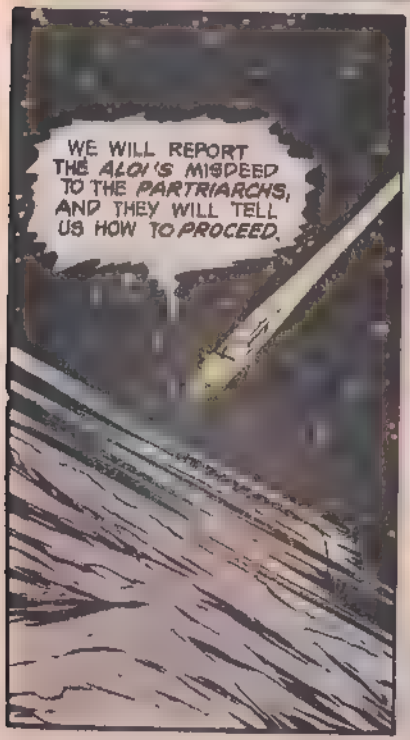

--BUT BEYOND VALUE TO US, BECAUSE OUR LEGENDS SAY THAT IT WAS FORGED BY THE PEACEGIVER HIMSELF, AS A TOKEN OF HIS ETERNAL LOVE FOR THE MARGOI, MY RACE.
NOW, THE ALOI HAVE IT... AND I AM DISGRACED.


I FEEL RESPONSIBLE, SOMEHOW, FOR FAILING TO HELP YOU.
COULD YOU LOCATE THE ALOI, IF YOUR SHIP WERE REPAIRED?
OF COURSE! BUT WHAT USE TO SPECULATE? MY VESSEL IS HOPELESSLY--

RUINED?!?




AN UNMEASURABLE TIME LATER, AS THE REBUILT SPACECRAFT THUNDERS OUT OF A LIGHT-YEARS-SPANNING SPACE-WARP, INTO THE STARLIT SKY OVER A STRANGE NEW PLANET...
BELOW IS MY HOMEWORLD, SUPERMAN.



THAT'S NOT QUITE WHAT I AGREED TO, NEMRUL.
YOU SAID YOU KNEW WHERE TO FIND THE ALOI, AND I PROMISED TO HELP YOU RETRIEVE YOUR LOST "GRAYL".
ALAS, I FEAR IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS ALL THAT!

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE AFTER THIS ONE

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SOON I'LL CONTROL EVERYTHING THAT'S CHOCOLATY . AND THE GREAT TASTE WILL BE MINE--ALL MINE.
BY HERA, I PLAN TO STOP YOUR NEFARIOUS ENTERPRISE. AND YOUR BULLETS WON'T STOP ME. I CAME PREPARED
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HOSTESS® CUP CAKES.
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YOU AND YOUR HENCHMEN WERE EASILY TAKEN, BARON!
TAKEN WITH THE CHOCOLATY TASTE OF HOSTESS® CUP CAKES! YOUR MAGIC LASSO COMPELS ME TO SPEAK THE TRUTH--
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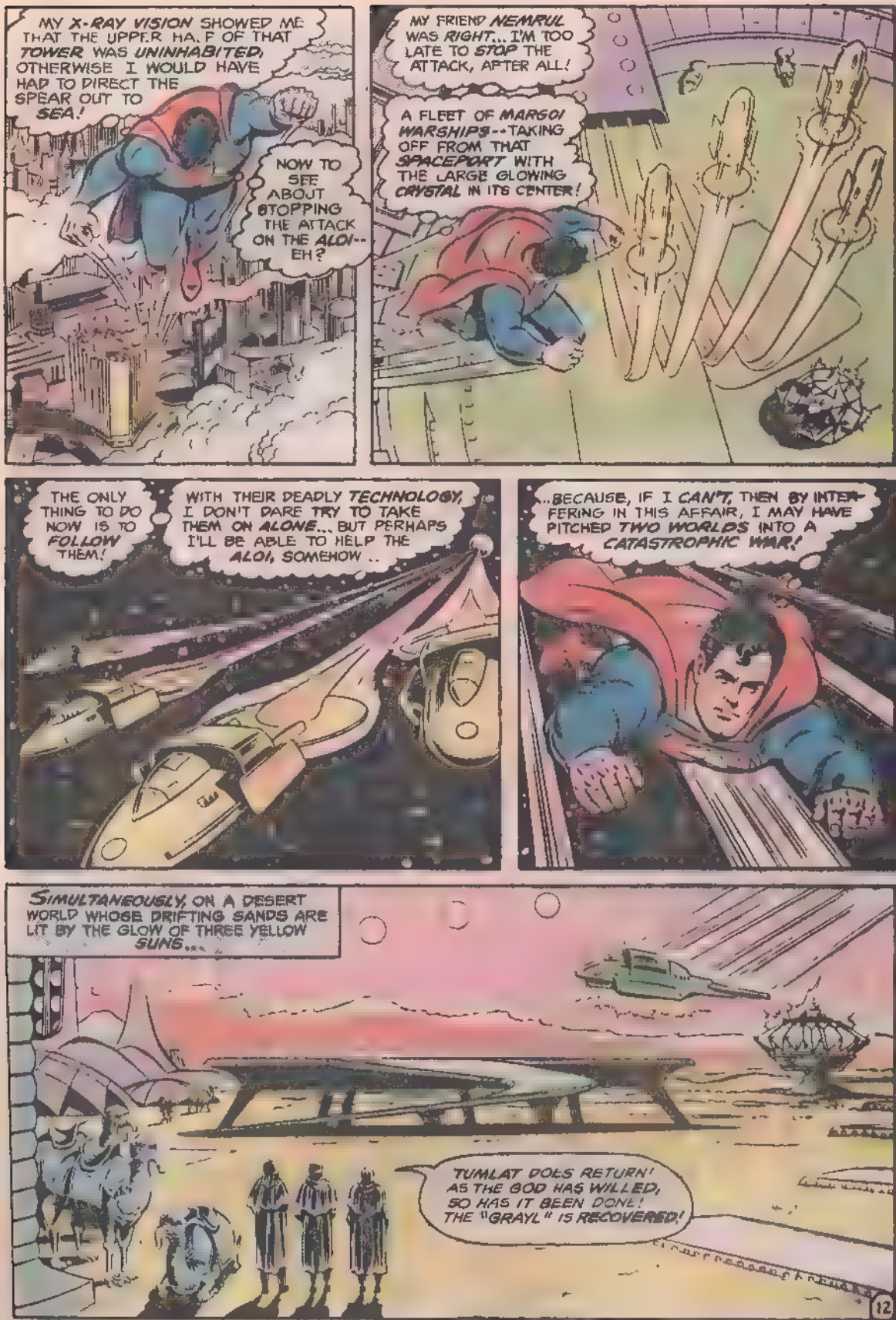
YOU SEE I DO KNOW WHERE THE ALOI HAVE TAKEN THE "GRAYL"
BECAUSE IT WAS FROM THAT PLACE THAT I STOLE IT!
HOLD IT! YOU MEAN YOU WERE THE ONE WHO STOLE THE "GRAYL" FIRST?
ONLY THIS TIME THE ALOI ORIGINALLY STOLE THE "GRAYL" FROM US, ABOUT A THOUSAND EARTH-YEARS AGO!
IT'S TAKEN US A MILLENNIUM TO DEVELOP THE WEAPONS AND TRICKS WE NEEDED TO GET THE GRAYL "BACK" SO YOU SEE WE ARE IN THE RIGHT!
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
YOU AND THE ALOI HAVE BOTH DONE SOMETHING WRONG-- AND YOU BOTH THINK YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT NEITHER OF YOU ARE--
--EH? WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
I AM SORRY SUPERMAN. BUT I WAS AFRAID THAT WOULD BE YOUR ATTITUDE!
I ONLY ALLOWED YOU TO RETURN TO MY HOME WORLD WITH ME SO THAT I COULD BE CERTAIN YOU WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH OUR HOLY CAUSE!
THESE CLONE-WARRIORS WILL KEEP YOU INCOMMUNICADO UNTIL THE "GRAYL" IS ONCE MORE IN OUR HANDS--
ABSOLUTELY NOT!

RESIST IF YOU MUST, SUPERMAN! BUT IN THE END THE CLONE-WARRIORS WILL TRIUMPH!
AND EVEN IF YOU SHOULD SUCCEED IN ESCAPING THEM -
--YOU WILL BE TOO LATE TO STOP US FROM ATTACKING AND DESTROYING THE ALOI ONCE AND FOR ALL!
ARRUUH!
THOSE HARPOON-SPEARS THE "CLONE-WARRIORS" USE-- CHARGED WITH INCREDIBLE ENERGY!
THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE ALOI AND THIS RACE IS SO ADVANCED--
--THEIR WEAPONS CAN ACTUALLY HARM ME! IT FEELS AS THOUGH THE ATOMIC STRUCTURE OF MY BODY WERE BEING WEAKENED, DISPERSED!
ANOTHER BLOW FROM ONE OF THOSE SPEARS--
--MIGHT KILL ME!
CAN'T LET MYSELF--BE TOUCHED!

TRAVELING AT SUPER-SPEED... BUT THOSE WARRIORS MUST HAVE EYESIGHT AS GOOD AS MINE!
ONE OF THEM SEES ME!
"HE'S THROWING HIS SPEAR SO FAST IT'S CRACKING THE SOUND BARRIER..."
KTHOOM
CLOSING IN ON ME! THAT HARPOON-LIKE HEAD MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF INDEPENDENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM!
IT'S EVEN TRACKING MY EVERY TURN! BUT MAYBE THAT GIVES ME AN EDGE...!
LET'S SEE HOW QUICK THAT GUIDANCE SYSTEM CAN REACT!
I'M WAGERING MY LIFE THAT IT WON'T REACT QUITE..
--FAST--
--ENOUGH!
KTHOOM!


MY X-RAY VISION SHOWED ME THAT THE UPPER HALF OF THAT TOWER WAS UNINHABITED, OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DIRECT THE SPEAR OUT TO SEA!
NOW TO SEE ABOUT STOPPING THE ATTACK ON THE ALOI--EH?
MY FRIEND NEMRUL WAS RIGHT... I'M TOO LATE TO STOP THE ATTACK, AFTER ALL!
A FLEET OF MARGOI WARSHIPS--TAKING OFF FROM THAT SPACEPORT WITH THE LARGE GLOWING CRYSTAL IN ITS CENTER!
THE ONLY THING TO DO NOW IS TO FOLLOW THEM!
WITH THEIR DEADLY TECHNOLOGY, I DON'T DARE TRY TO TAKE THEM ON ALONE... BUT PERHAPS I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP THE ALOI, SOMEHOW ..
..BECAUSE, IF I CAN'T, THEN BY INTERFERING IN THIS AFFAIR, I MAY HAVE PITCHED TWO WORLDS INTO A CATASTROPHIC WAR!
SIMULTANEOUSLY, ON A DESERT WORLD WHOSE DRIFTING SANDS ARE LIT BY THE GLOW OF THREE YELLOW SUNS...
TUMLAT DOES RETURN! AS THE GOD HAS WILLED, SO HAS IT BEEN DONE! THE "GRAYL" IS RECOVERED!

TELL US, THEN, OLD ONE, DOES THIS QUIET YOUR FEARS?
I FEAR THAT THEY DO, O KAFFA.
DO. YOUR ANCIENT PROPHESIES TELL WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR PEOPLE NOW THAT WE HAVE REGAINED THE "GRAYL"?
THE ANCIENT WRITINGS PREDICTED THAT OUR HATED ENEMY, THE MARGOL WOULD ONE DAY MAKE OFF WITH THE SACRED "GRAYL".
THEY ALSO PROPHESIED TO RETURN -- AND WITH THE BEGINNING OF A WAR BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES THAT WOULD DECIMATE BOTH OUR WORLDS!
THE SCROLLS TELL OF BLACK WAR, AND SUFFERING, WHICH MAY ONLY BE ENDED BY THE INTERVENTION OF THE SON.
SON? SON? WHOSE SON? WHAT SAY YOU, PRIEST?
THE WRITINGS, ALAS, ARE UNCLEAR.
THE ALIEN ADDRESSED AS THE KAFFA SPEAKS AND WAITS TO REPLY
BUT IF WE DO NOT HAVE A CHANCE, FOR A THOUSAND A SWARM OF SHADOWS ATTACK IN THE SWELTERING NIGHT
WE ARE BLASTED BY ENERGY BLASTS THAT FILL THE DESERT SANDS
THE MARGOL!

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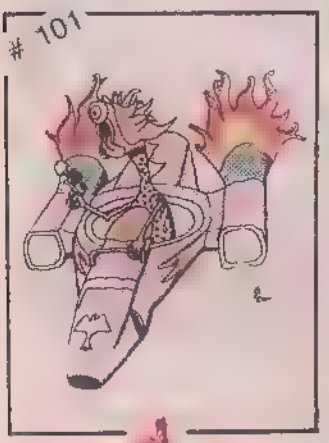

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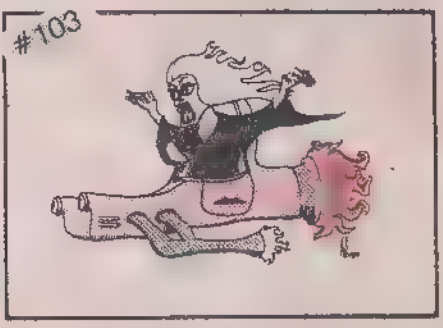

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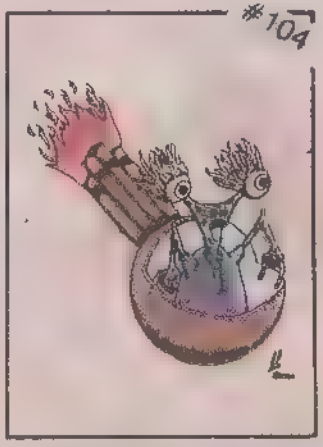

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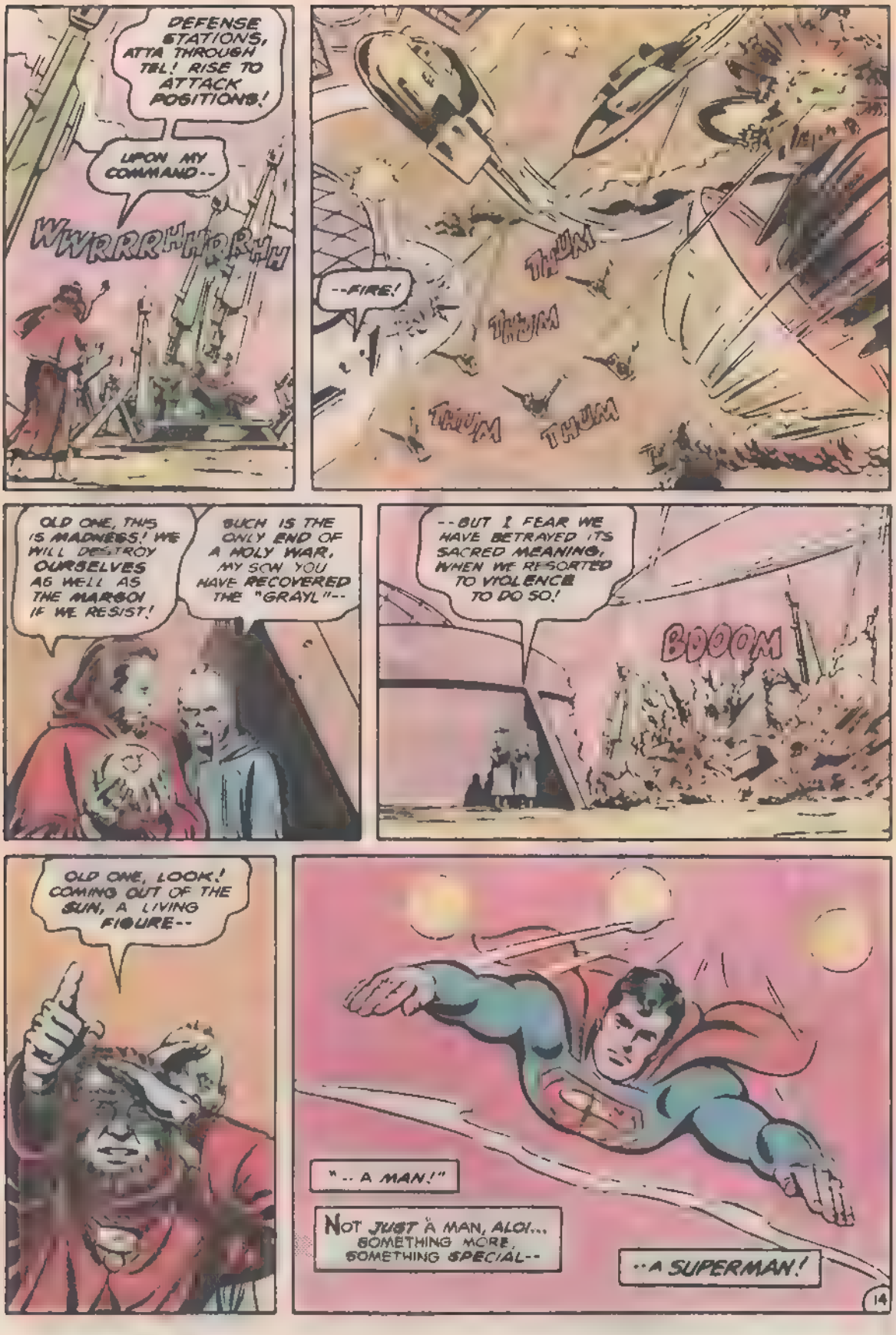
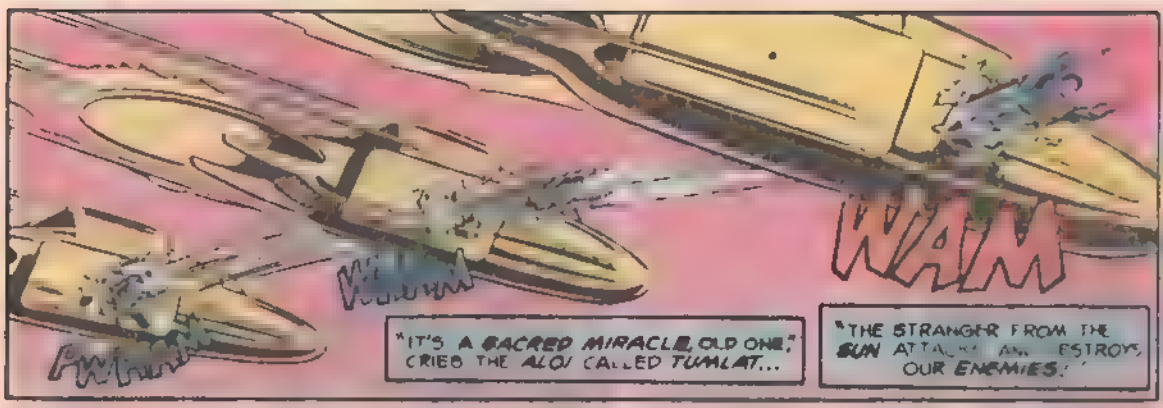
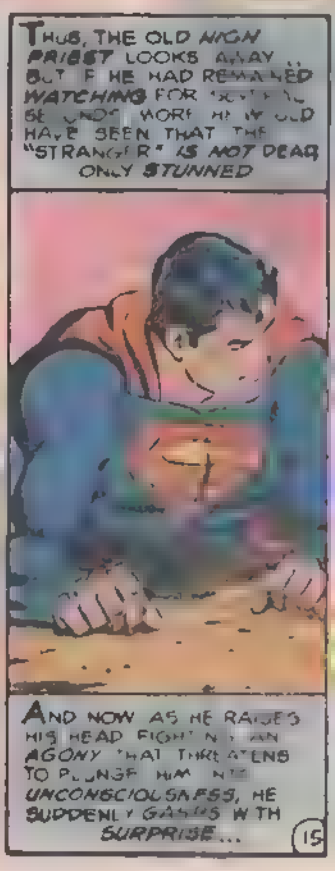

DEFENSE STATIONS, ATTA THROUGH TEL! RISE TO ATTACK POSITIONS!
UPON MY COMMAND--
WWRRRHHRRH
--FIRE!
THUM
THUM
THUM
THUM
OLD ONE, THIS IS MADNESS! WE WILL DESTROY OURSELVES AS WELL AS THE MARGOI IF WE RESIST!
SUCH IS THE ONLY END OF A HOLY WAR, MY SON YOU HAVE RECOVERED THE "GRAYL"--
--BUT I FEAR WE HAVE BETRAYED ITS SACRED MEANING, WHEN WE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE TO DO SO!
BOOOM
OLD ONE, LOOK! COMING OUT OF THE SUN, A LIVING FIGURE--
"-- A MAN!"
NOT JUST A MAN, ALOI... SOMETHING MORE, SOMETHING SPECIAL--
--A SUPERMAN!


WAM
"IT'S A SACRED MIRACLE, OLD ONE!" CRIES THE ALOI CALLED TUMLAT...
"THE STRANGER FROM THE SUN ATTACKS AND DESTROYS OUR ENEMIES!"

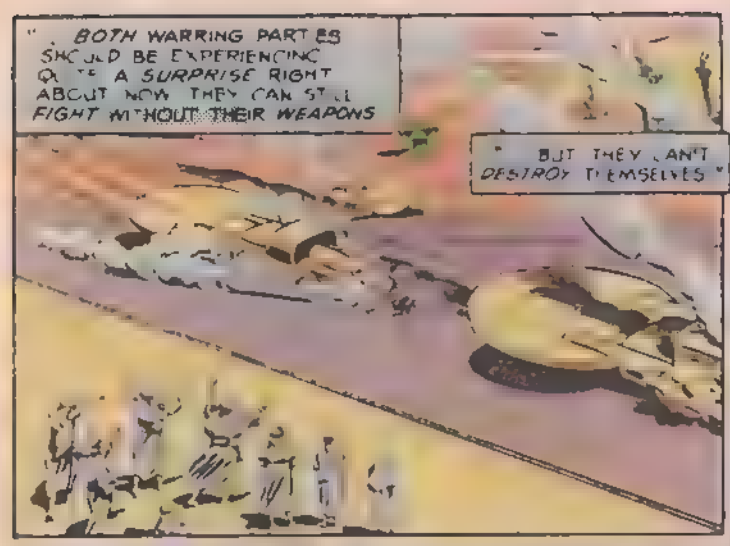
SCRUNCH
SKRUNG
SKRUNG
"NOT ONLY OUR ENEMIES MEN REVERE THE AGED HIGH PRIEST

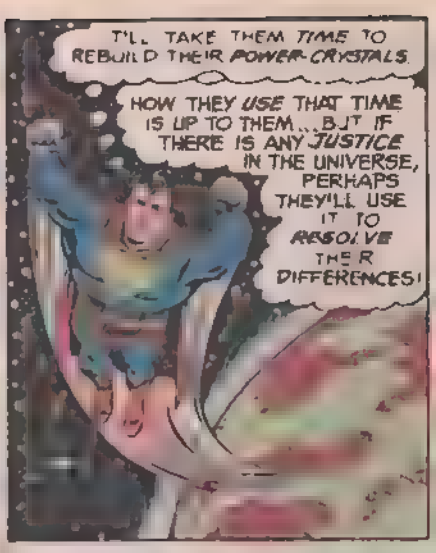
"NOW ONE OF OUR GUNS STRIKES BACK, AND THE IMPACT IS TOO MUCH FOR THE INTERLOPER TO BEAR. HE FALLS...

"... AND LIES AS ONE DEAD. AND YET, FOR A MOMENT I ALMOST THOUGHT THE LEGEND HAD BEEN FULFILLED..."

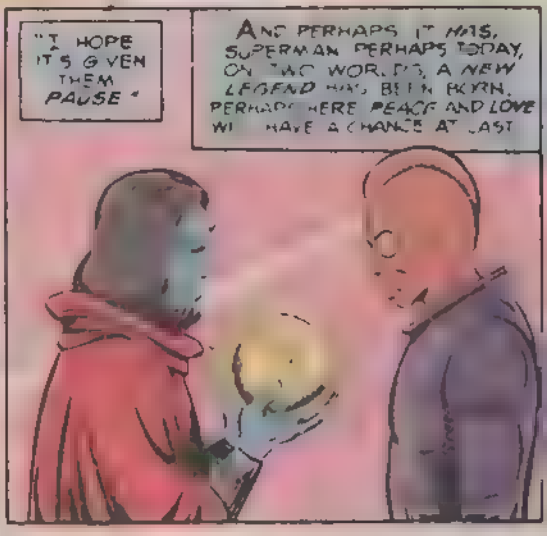

THUS, THE OLD HIGH PRIEST LOOKS AWAY... BUT IF HE HAD REMAINED WATCHING FOR SOME SECONDS MORE HE WOULD HAVE SEEN THAT THE "STRANGER" IS NOT DEAD, ONLY STUNNED
AND NOW AS HE RAISES HIS HEAD FIGHTING AN AGONY THAT THREATENS TO PLUNGE HIM INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS, HE SUDDENLY GASPS WITH SURPRISE...
15

...AND RECOGNITION...
THAT GIANT CRYSTAL--IT'S ALMOST IDENTICAL TO THE ONE AT THE MARGOI SPACEPORT! AND THE WAY IT GLOWS WHENEVER AN ALOI WEAPON FIRES...
...COULD IT BE SOME KIND OF MASTER POWER-SOURCE?
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...
...A CONCENTRATED BEAM OF HEAT VISION INTENSE ENOUGH TO RAISE THE CRYSTAL'S INTERNAL STRUCTURE TO--
--THE BREAKING POINT!
KRAAKKOOM
I WAS RIGHT! THE ALOI'S WEAPONS HAVE STOPPED FIRING!
IN ANOTHER FEW SECONDS, THE MARGOI WILL REALIZE THAT THEIR ENEMIES ARE COMPLETELY DEFENSELESS! THEY'LL ATTACK IN FORCE!
A FEW SECONDS ISN'T MUCH TIME--
--BUT AT TRANS-LIGHT SPEED, IT MAY BE ALL I NEED TO REACH THE MARGOI HOMEWORLD--
--WHERE I CAN PERFORM A SIMILAR SERVICE FOR THE MARGOI POWER-CRYSTAL!
THERE! NOW IF I'M RIGHT..
KRRAAGHOOM


". . . BOTH WARRING PARTIES SHOULD BE EXPERIENCING QUITE A SURPRISE RIGHT ABOUT NOW. THEY CAN STILL FIGHT WITHOUT THEIR WEAPONS
". . . BUT THEY CAN'T DESTROY THEMSELVES."


IT'LL TAKE THEM TIME TO REBUILD THEIR POWER-CRYSTALS.
HOW THEY USE THAT TIME IS UP TO THEM...BUT IF THERE IS ANY JUSTICE IN THE UNIVERSE, PERHAPS THEY'LL USE IT TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES!

"THEY CAME VERY CLOSE TO LEARNING JUST HOW ALL CONSUMING A HOLY CAUSE CAN BE . . . AND HOW WRONG IT IS TO FIGHT IN THE NAME OF PEACE


"I HOPE IT'S GIVEN THEM PAUSE."
AND PERHAPS IT HAS, SUPERMAN. PERHAPS TODAY, ON THIS WORLD, A NEW LEGEND HAS BEEN BORN. PERHAPS HERE PEACE AND LOVE WILL HAVE A CHANCE AT LAST

AN UNMEASURABLE TIME LATER, ON THE PLANET WE CALL EARTH.

HMMM... THAT'S NICE! MERRY CHRISTMAS, DARLING...
EH? CLARK?!

YOU WERE EXPECTING SOMEONE ELSE, LOIS? EVERYONE'S GONE HOME!
I WAS WAITING FOR SUPERMAN ... BUT I GUESS HE HAS OTHER THINGS TO DO!

MAYBE SO-- BUT I'M SURE HE'S THINKING ABOUT YOU! C'MON, LOIS, I'LL WALK YOU HOME!
THANKS! SOMETIMES YOU CAN BE VERY SWEET! OH .. AND, CLARK .
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
AWSHUCKS! I WISH I COULD EXTEND TO ALL OUR READERS!

FUN FACTORY

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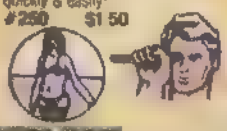

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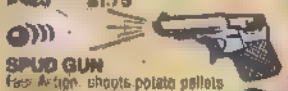

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Fires 4-ft. range, shoots potato pellets
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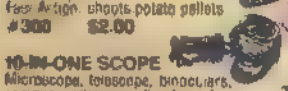

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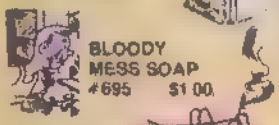

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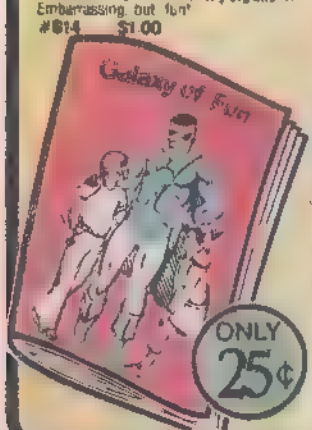

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Appear to throw your voice into desks, under beds, out of pets, from other people etc. Ventriloquist device & secret guidebook included
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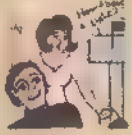

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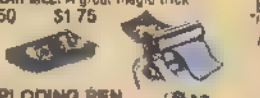

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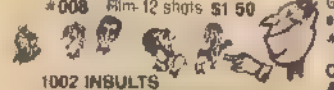

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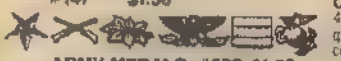

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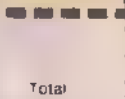

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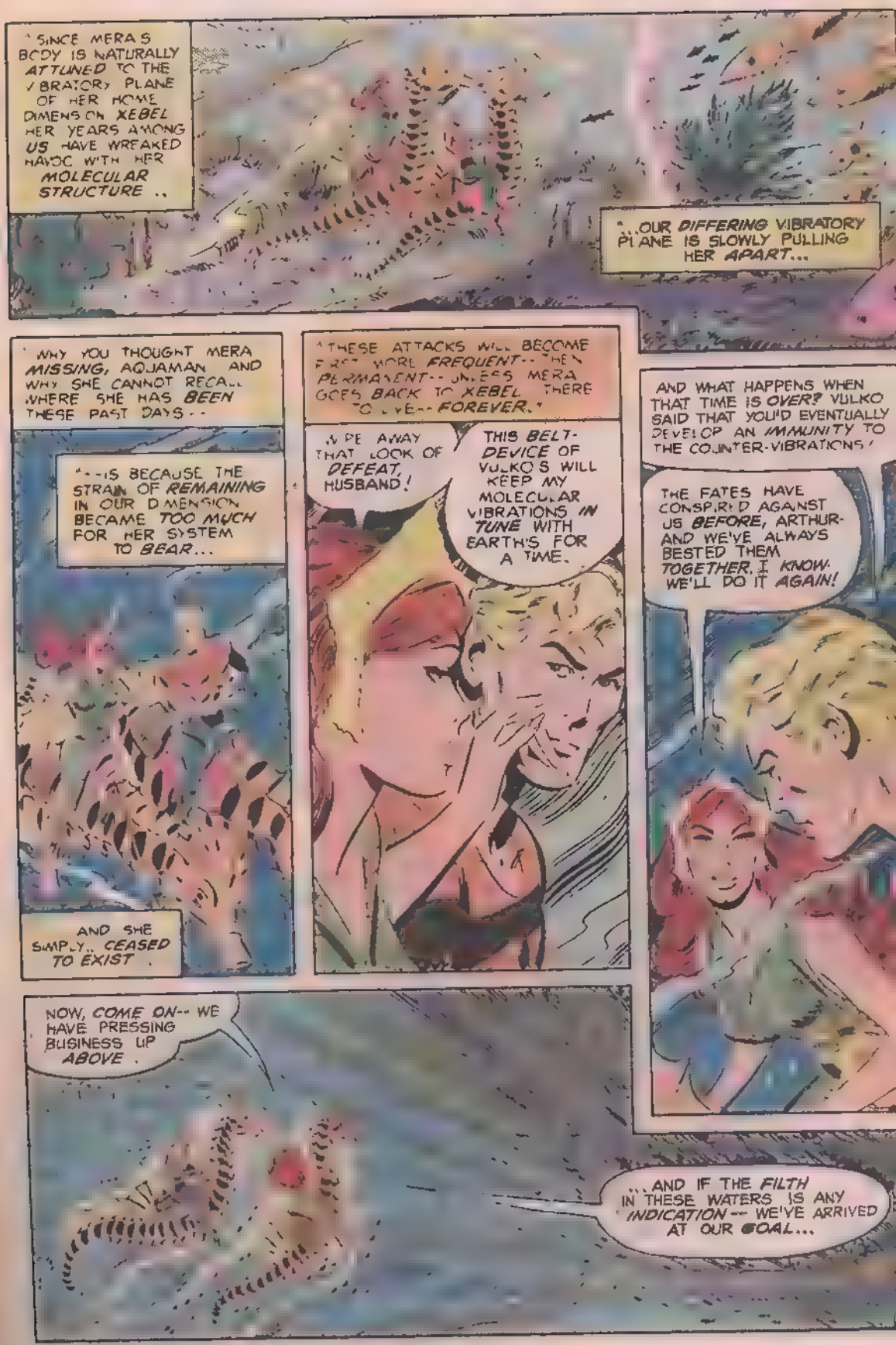
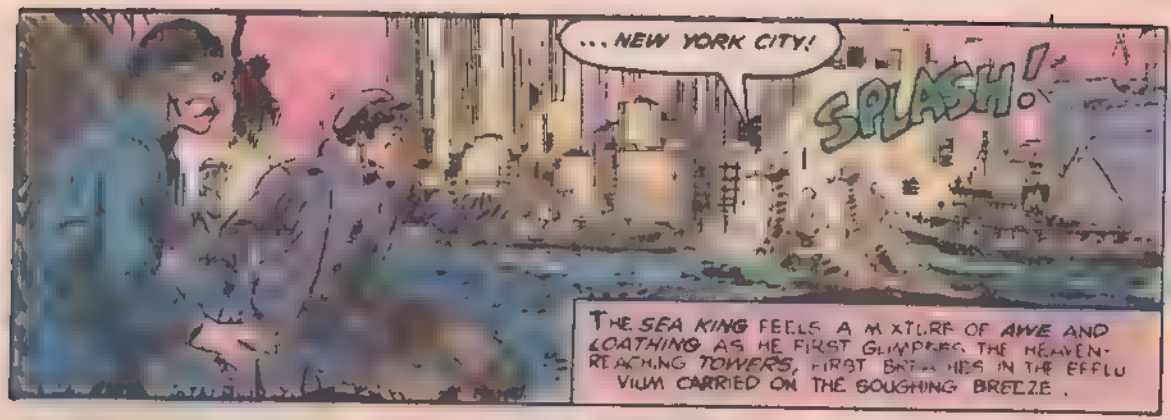
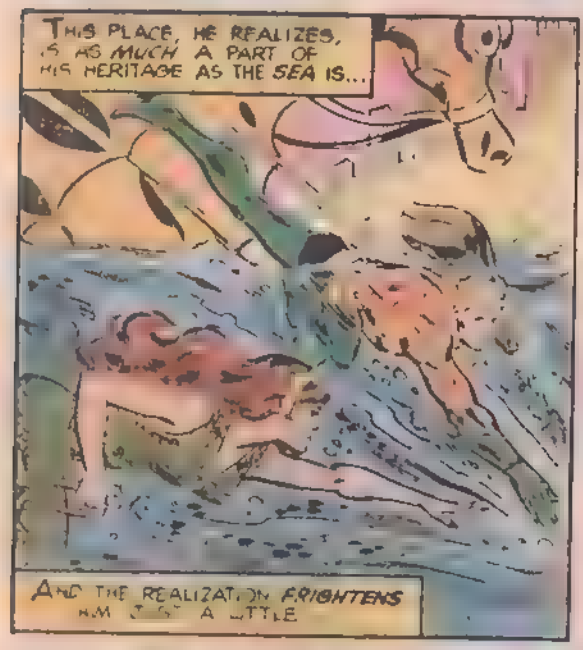
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

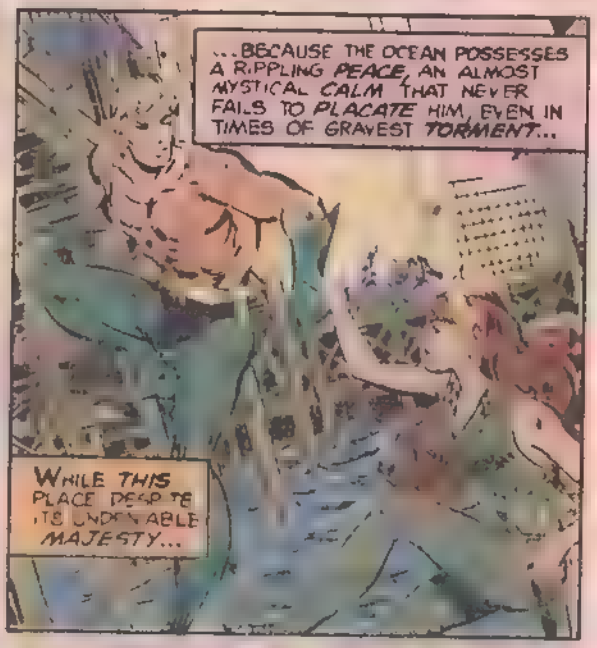
HE WAS BORN ARTHUR CURRY, HALF-BREED SON OF MAN AND MERMAID, AND ROSE TO BECOME RULER OF THE MIGHTY SEA KINGDOM OF ATLANTIS. EVENTUALLY HE RELINQUISHED THAT THRONE, CHOOSING INSTEAD TO REMAIN THE DAUNTLESS DEFENDER OF ALL THE SEVEN SEAS -- THE VALIANT SUPER-HERO CALLED
AQUAMAN
IT WAS A TIME FOR REJOICING HERE IN ATLANTIS IN ONE FELL SWOOP AQUAMAN HAD THWARTED THE INSIDIOUS BLACK MANTA'S ATTEMPTS TO BOTH CONQUER THIS SUBSEA KINGDOM AND LEVEL THE SURFACE CITY OF NEW VENICE...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
YES, IT WAS A TIME FOR REJOICING! A TIME CUT PAINFULLY SHORT WHEN THE APPREHENDED MANTA SUDDENLY EXPLODED, REVEALING THAT HE WAS NOT MAN BUT MACHINE--
-- AND PLUNGING THE MARINE MARVEL INTO THE DAPPLED DEPTHS OF A MYSTERY THAT WILL ULTIMATELY ROCK HIS LIFE TO ITS VERY FOUNDATIONS...
Brother Rat!
J M DE MATTEIS WRITER
JON HECK ARTIST
BEN ODA LETTERER
JERRY SERPE COLORIST
LEN WEIN EDITOR

WELL, YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT, BUDDY! I KEPT TRYING TO TELL YOU THAT THE REAL BLACK MANTA WAS STILL IN PRISON WHEN I WAS RELEASED A WEEK AGO!
THERE WAS NO WAY THIS GUY COULD'VE BEEN THE ORIGINAL ITEM!
I'M... SORRY, CAL. I'VE BEEN UNDER QUITE A BIT OF PRESSURE LATELY... UH-- NO PUN INTENDED.
BUT -- WITH THE SCAVENGER AND THEN THAT LUNATIC POSEIDON GIVING ME GRIEF -- AND MERA VANISHING AND REAPPEARING LIKE A MAGICIAN'S ASSISTANT...
T'S A WONDER I LISTENED TO ANYTHING YOU SAID!
WELL THERE IS ONE PROBLEM YOU NEED WONDER ABOUT NO LONGER, OLD FRIEND
VULKO! MERA!
WHILE YOU'VE BEEN INSPECTING MANTA'S REMAINS -- I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO COMPLETE MY TESTS ON MERA -- ASCERTAIN THE NATURE OF HER ILLNESS...
...AND I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS.
WHAT IS IT, VULKO? TELL ME!
UNLESS MERA RETURNS TO THE OTHER-DIMENSIONAL WATER WORLD IN WHICH SHE WAS BORN...
...SHE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DIE!
WHAT KIND OF IDIOCY IS THIS? HAVE YOUR BURDENS AS ATLANTIS'S KING ADDLED YOUR MEDICAL SENSIBILITIES?
ARTHUR... CALM DOWN - PLEASE
AND LISTEN TO HIM!
THE WIZENED ATLANTEAN MONARCH DRAWS IN HIS BREATH, FIGHTS BACK A TEAR THAT DEMANDS RELEASE AND SPEAKS IN A QUIVERING VOICE
2


"SINCE MERA'S BODY IS NATURALLY ATTUNED TO THE VIBRATORY PLANE OF HER HOME DIMENSION XEBEL HER YEARS AMONG US HAVE WREAKED HAVOC WITH HER MOLECULAR STRUCTURE..
"...OUR DIFFERING VIBRATORY PLANE IS SLOWLY PULLING HER APART...
"WHY YOU THOUGHT MERA MISSING, AQUAMAN AND WHY SHE CANNOT RECALL WHERE SHE HAS BEEN THESE PAST DAYS--
"--IS BECAUSE THE STRAIN OF REMAINING IN OUR DIMENSION BECAME TOO MUCH FOR HER SYSTEM TO BEAR...
AND SHE SIMPLY... CEASED TO EXIST.
"THESE ATTACKS WILL BECOME EVER MORE FREQUENT--THEN PERMANENT--UNLESS MERA GOES BACK TO XEBEL THERE TO LIVE--FOREVER."
WIPE AWAY THAT LOOK OF DEFEAT, HUSBAND!
THIS BELT-DEVICE OF VULKO'S WILL KEEP MY MOLECULAR VIBRATIONS IN TUNE WITH EARTH'S FOR A TIME.
AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THAT TIME IS OVER? VULKO SAID THAT YOU'D EVENTUALLY DEVELOP AN IMMUNITY TO THE COUNTER-VIBRATIONS!
THE FATES HAVE CONSPIRED AGAINST US BEFORE, ARTHUR-AND WE'VE ALWAYS BESTED THEM TOGETHER. I KNOW. WE'LL DO IT AGAIN!
NOW, COME ON-- WE HAVE PRESSING BUSINESS UP ABOVE.
...AND IF THE FILTH IN THESE WATERS IS ANY INDICATION--WE'VE ARRIVED AT OUR GOAL...


...NEW YORK CITY!
SPLASH!
THE SEA KING FEELS A MIXTURE OF AWE AND LOATHING AS HE FIRST GLIMPSES THE HEAVEN-REACHING TOWERS, FIRST BREATHES IN THE EFFLUVIUM CARRIED ON THE SOUGHING BREEZE.


THIS PLACE, HE REALIZES, IS AS MUCH A PART OF HIS HERITAGE AS THE SEA IS...
AND THE REALIZATION FRIGHTENS HIM JUST A LITTLE


...BECAUSE THE OCEAN POSSESSES A RIPPLING PEACE, AN ALMOST MYSTICAL CALM THAT NEVER FAILS TO PLACATE HIM, EVEN IN TIMES OF GRAVEST TORMENT...
WHILE THIS PLACE DESPITE ITS UNDENIABLE MAJESTY...

...IS CLEARLY INSANE...

4

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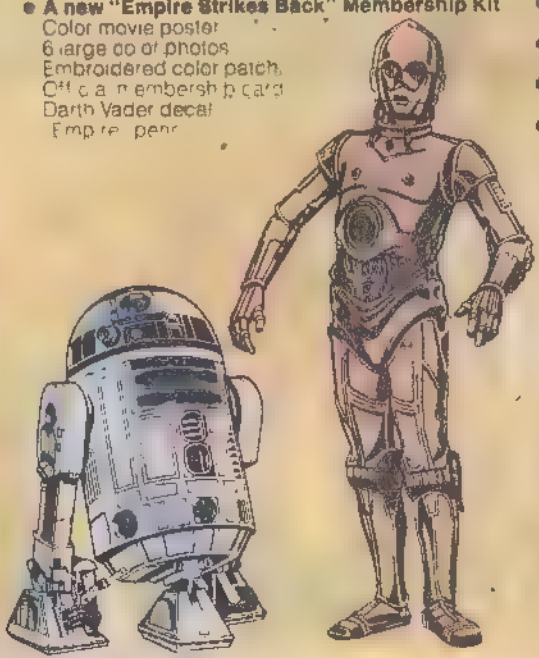

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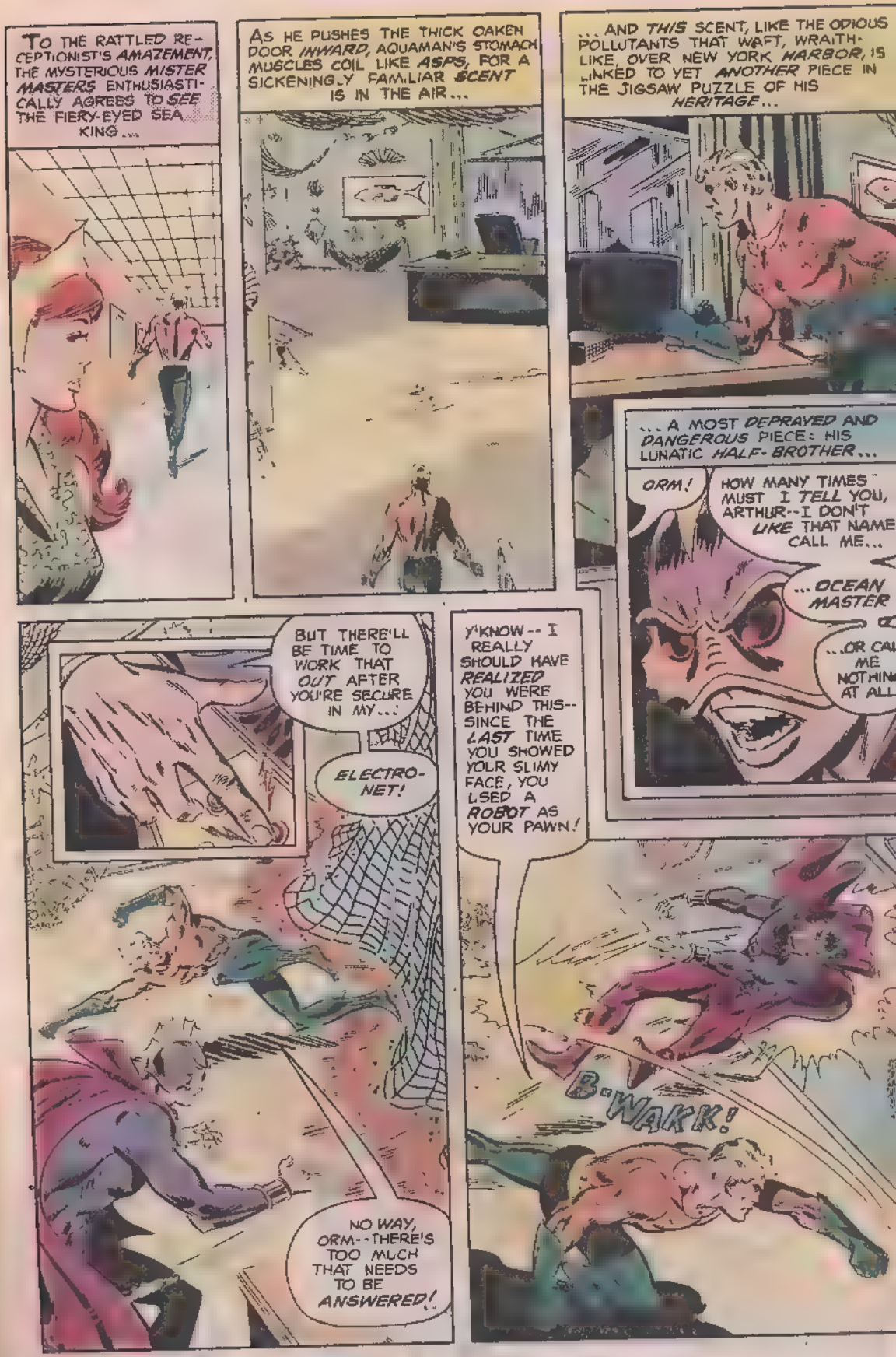
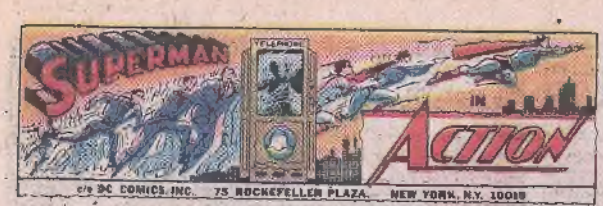
...IS ON THE SIXTH FLOOR OF THIS BUILDING.
WHICH MEANS WHATEVER SCUM WAS MANIPULATING THAT ROBOT IS PROBABLY UP THERE TOO...
...SO I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HIM...
...AND BREAK HIM IN HALF!
KINGDOM of HOPE
I WANT TO SEE THE PERSON IN CHARGE.
THAT WOULD BE OUR PRESIDENT-- MISTER MASTERS-- BUT HE NEVER SEES ANYONE!
HE'LL SEE ME!
WELL... I'LL TRY HIM! UH... WHO SHOULD I SAY IS HERE?
AQUAMAN!
Y-YOU'RE KIDDING!
I ASSURE YOU HE'S NOT!
5


TO THE RATTLED RECEPTIONIST'S AMAZEMENT, THE MYSTERIOUS MISTER MASTERS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AGREES TO SEE THE FIERY-EYED SEA KING...
AS HE PUSHES THE THICK OAKEN DOOR INWARD, AQUAMAN'S STOMACH MUSCLES COIL LIKE ASPS, FOR A SICKENINGLY FAMILIAR SCENT IS IN THE AIR...
...AND THIS SCENT, LIKE THE ODIOUS POLLUTANTS THAT WAFT, WRAITH-LIKE, OVER NEW YORK HARBOR, IS LINKED TO YET ANOTHER PIECE IN THE JIGSAW PUZZLE OF HIS HERITAGE...
...A MOST DEPRAVED AND DANGEROUS PIECE: HIS LUNATIC HALF-BROTHER...
ORM!
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU, ARTHUR--I DON'T LIKE THAT NAME CALL ME...
...OCEAN MASTER
...OR CA ME NOTHIN AT ALL
BUT THERE'LL BE TIME TO WORK THAT OUT AFTER YOU'RE SECURE IN MY...!
ELECTRO-NET!
Y'KNOW -- I REALLY SHOULD HAVE REALIZED YOU WERE BEHIND THIS-- SINCE THE LAST TIME YOU SHOWED YOUR SLIMY FACE, YOU USED A ROBOT AS YOUR PAWN!
B-WAKK!
NO WAY, ORM--THERE'S TOO MUCH THAT NEEDS TO BE ANSWERED!

QUESTIONS, SO MANY QUESTIONS, BUZZING LIKE A SWARM OF GNATS IN AQUAMAN'S MIND...
OOF!
BROOM!
COME ALONG-- FOLLOW ME, BROTHER DEAR -- IF YOU DARE! FOLLOW ME UP INTO...
WHAT WERE YOUR REASONS, ORM? WHERE WERE YOUR RESOURCES? THE ELABORATE WEAPONS, THE ELABORATE WEALTH THIS SCHEME REQUIRED...
.. THE LIGHT OF DAY!
...WHERE? WHY? HOW?
YOU'RE STILL IN GOOD SHAPE, ARTHUR -- STILL A PRIME SPECIMEN...
...BUT YOU'VE BEEN OUT OF THE WATER TOO LONG! AND THAT SUN IS SHINING DOWN VERY BRIGHTLY!
FACE IT, MY SMUG SIBLING -- AFTER AL- THESE YEARS, I FINALLY HAVE Y--
KATHOOM!
WHOOMM!
7

YOU FACE IT, ORM--EVEN AT HALF MY STRENGTH, I CAN STILL KICK YOUR TAIL IN WITHOUT EXERTING MYSELF!
NO--THIS ISN'T RIGHT! YOU ALWAYS BEAT ME! ALWAYS!
JUST THIS ONCE I WANTED TO BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOU--BUT I FAILED AGAIN!
AND I DIDN'T JUST FAIL MYSELF...
...I FAILED MOTHER!
MOTHER...?
OH GOD--HOW CAN I LIVE WITH THIS...
...DISGRACE...?
ORM... DON'T!
ORM?
NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT--THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM!

NEXT ISSUE: ORM'S STUNNING SECRET REVEALED IN THE TALE WE HAD TO CALL... "BEYOND the POSEIDON ADVENTURE!"



S-3643

Dear Mr. Bates:

May I congratulate you on a very fine issue. You had it all: Drama. Pathos. Humor. Love. And to top it off you added something we haven't seen in awhile: The villain going to great lengths to destroy his arch-foe.

Lex Luthor is a person who, like most other people, fails to take his own feelings into consideration. This reminded me of the days when the westerns rode high, the movies where the bad guy held the sheriff's girl hostage and it wasn't till he said he was going to kill her that he realized he loved her too.

Despite all his planning, Luthor made too good a choice. He fell in love with Angela Blake, but by the time he did, it was too late. There just wasn't any time left to save her. So he kidded himself into thinking that the emotion was false and then reprogrammed his robots to believe it as well. The clone was created and cured when he could not fool himself any longer. He was really in love with "Angela", but his stupid male ego wouldn't let him believe it.

The effect the story had on me is still hard to describe. I feel for Lex. I can understand what it's like to lose your love and not be able to do anything about it. And adding to it is the fact that he himself is responsible. If he had succeeded in trapping *Superman*, maybe Luthor would write off his loss as the price of success. But what does such a man do when his scheme backfires? He brainwashed himself into being a law-abiding citizen, a friend of *Superman's*, the type of person Angela Blake could fall in love with. At the end of the story, I found myself crying both with and for Luthor.

Congratulations to all concerned on the best story I've read during my eleven years of collecting.

RICHARD PERNA
67 Laurel Avenue
Neptune City, NJ 07753

The praise Cary received for his Luthor three-parter equals, if not surpasses, the compliments that snowed us under after his Jonathan Kent two-parter appeared! More accolades follow...—BR

Dear Editor:

It was just too good to be true. I wanted to believe that Lex Luthor had really reformed, that he no longer was pent up with anger and hatred. But as Cary Bates showed in *ACTION* #512, nothing short of a brainwashing would do the trick.

I also believed, without a question in my mind, that Luthor was in love with Angela. And, incredibly enough, this all-too-human emotion led to the crumbling of his insidious scheme in "Luthor's Day of Reckoning!"

The storyline and plot of this three-part extravaganza was Cary's most brilliant yet. We were left astounded by Luthor's newfound love and his conversion to good in "Luthor's Last Stand". And to clear up any doubts about his new lease on life, we were shown that he actually had made a 180° turnabout in "Luthor Fights For Good". And in the final chapter, we were left with one of the most imaginative culminating pieces ever scripted by a DC writer. Cary's execution of Project Angela was flawless. And he ended the tale with stirring emotionalism.

Luthor is mad, even demonic to an extent. But he is still human, more so than I ever thought possible. The closing scene added a new dimension to Luthor that we will not soon forget.

ALAN GARY GIROUX
7609 W. Weldon
Phoenix, AZ 85033

Dear Julie:

Cary Bates wrote such great previous chapters that until *ACTION* #512, I was convinced Luthor had truly reformed. Little did I know that his reformation was as diabolical a scheme as Luthor (or Cary) has ever devised. From the presidential reception to the sobbing Lex, I was as engrossed in a comic as I have ever been. The attempt on Luthor's life, the crook-icing by *Superman*, and the wedding itself were pieces of a pie that could have been less than appetizing if not for *Superman's* thoroughness in checking Lex's brain patterns.

Cary did a great job with the oration of Project Angela, covering every base including why Luthor used a clone instead of the original Angela. But the meat of the story was shown in the last three pages. I felt sorry for Luthor and, until this story, had never fully understood the extent of his hatred for *Superman*. To use and kill a person the way he did was sick and in the end he got exactly what he deserved—life without true love.

LEONA CANTIN
58 Hayden Avenue
Tiverton, RI 02878

Dear Editor:

Hats off to Cary Bates for "Luthor's Day of Reckoning". He ended this series of stories in a masterful way that was truly original, despite the fact that Luthor has reformed (or pretended to) in many imaginary stories in the past. The best part was the way in which Luthor fell victim to his own scheme for revenge. I can't recall an instance where this has happened to a villain in such a way and Mr. Bates should be especially commended for this bit of creativity.

The *Air Wave* story, "Sinister Spectacle of the Sunspotter", was nice for two reasons. First, *Air Wave* has finally acquired a super-villain, particularly one who can negate his powers. Second, you introduced a rival love interest for young Hal Jordan and I'm sure this will cause Karen troubles as she tries to tell him she knows his secret. I had a hard time trying to decide whether I agree with you putting Hal on the football team or not. It's nice to show more of his school activities, but it will probably create some problems for him by being in the spotlight when an emergency occurs. In any case, I look forward to developments in future issues.

GREGG STAMEY JR.
21 Hampton Heights
Canton, NC 28716

As we said previously, Air Wave is back in limbo now that Aquaman is swimming into our second-feature slot. His return will be determined by reader support...and we assume we can count your vote as pro-Air Wave!—Bob Rozakis

CURRENT SUPER-ATTRACTIONS

ON SALE DECEMBER 11th:

DC COMICS PRESENTS #31—*Robin* joins *Superman* as the main attraction in "The Deadliest Show on Earth!" Plus: "Whatever Happened to Robotman?"

SUPERMAN #357—It's *Superman* versus *Vartox* and the winner will become "Food For a God". Plus: *Superman 2020* must stop "The Troublemaker of New Metropolis!"

SUPERMAN FAMILY #206—*Supergirl* finds "Strangers at the Heart's Core"; *Mr. & Mrs. Superman* must free the "Hostage of the Harlequin"; it's Clark Kent versus Lois Barnett in "Scoop for a Snoop"; Lois Lane asks *Superman*, "Have You Ever Told Me the Story of My Life?"; and Jimmy Olsen must elude "Open Season on Red-Headed Reporters!"

ON SALE DECEMBER 23rd:

NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY #16—The Boy of Steel gets adopted...again...in "A New Life For the Orphan From Krypton!" Plus: "Superboy Meets Clark Kent!"

SUPER FRIENDS #42—Our heroes have a "colorful" adventure in "How Green Was My Gotham?" Plus: The *Wonder Twins* celebrate "A Christmas With Everything!"

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